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Senior Adults Can Become Musicians in New University of Dayton Band

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Aug. 1, 2000
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NEWS RELEASE

SENIOR ADULTS CAN BECOME MUSICIANS IN NEW UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON BAND

DAYTON, Ohio — Take a group of senior citizens who have never played music before, give them instruments and a couple of lessons in playing by ear, and let them have a go. No matter what sound emanates from that group, it will be sweet music to Linda Hartley's ears.

Hartley, associate professor of music and coordinator of music education at the University of Dayton, is eager to begin molding a band from the senior adults who will be the news kids on campus this fall. The New Horizons Band — soon to be one of only two of its kind in Ohio and one of only three such university-sponsored bands in the nation — will make its debut in September, giving mature adults the chance to learn to play the instrument they've always wanted to but never had the time, resources, support for or access to as children.

Lessons and group band rehearsals will begin in conjunction with the upcoming academic semester, and Hartley is calling all inexperienced senior adults to come and join the fun. Lessons will be given in flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, baritone, tuba and percussion, and students can purchase or rent their instruments from any music dealer.

"The biggest difference between our band and others in the area, such as the Kettering and Centerville civic bands, is that we're offering the opportunity to start from scratch," Hartley said. "People who have never before played an instrument — or who haven't played for many years — can come and learn the fundamentals of music and experience the fun of playing together in a band. Eventually we'll get to the stage where we'll have some intermediate and advanced players, but for now the band will be primarily composed of beginners."

Students will meet Tuesday mornings for 30-minute lessons in groups of like instruments. Full band rehearsals will be from 9:15 to 10 a.m. Thursdays, followed by social time for the new musicians.

Hartley said the band will perform once at the end of each term, which will follow the University's academic calendar. "Eventually, I'd like to see the New Horizons Band performing

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in concert with other ensembles on campus," she said. "As their skill levels increase, perhaps our students will start breaking off into their own ensembles within the band — such as a jazz ensemble or Dixieland ensemble."

The first New Horizons Band — a trademark name — was founded in 1991 at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., and "they've been sprouting up around the country since," Hartley said. Most of the bands, such as the Buddy Rogers Music New Horizons Band in Cincinnati, are sponsored by music dealers.

"I'm excited about this for a number of reasons," Hartley said. "Music is for all ages, not just the young. There are countless school band programs in this country that provide wonderful opportunities for students to learn to play. There are many adult community bands as well, but the participants most likely started playing as children. And when we train our own students, they get a certificate to teach music to pre-kindergarteners through 12th-grade students. But music should be accessible to everyone, no matter what their age.

"This will also give our students the opportunity to work with a different population, since some of our music education and music therapy students will be giving lessons.

"One of my greatest loves is to teach beginners," Hartley added. "So finding a whole new population to introduce music to is of great interest to me."

Senior adults are typically more motivated, more disciplined and have more time to practice, according to NHB literature. "That means that everyone who participates will be motivated to do so because of the music, and not because their mothers said they had to play," Hartley added with a laugh. "They'll be committed and they'll practice."

Robert Keil, professor of chemistry at UD, supports Hartley's theories. Keil decided to take up the saxophone three years ago at age 55, though he had not studied music as a youth.

"As a young person, I was interested in sports," Keil said. "There wasn't really any encouragement for me to play music because no one else in my family is a musician. But I enjoy singing, and using my wind — and I've always been attracted to the moodiness of a sax.

"I'm finding a lot of personal satisfaction in learning to play, and it's contributing so much to my life," Keil said. "I enjoy the challenge, and I enjoy the discipline of studying outside my field of endeavor. Music has also brought me a greater appreciation for humanity. The sciences teach you how to do things, but the arts teach you about the quality of life."

Hartley said her teaching philosophy for the new students will be to develop good tone and rhythmic feeling, to promote playing by ear before teaching to read music, and to create an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere for lessons. "We believe this program will offer many benefits to its participants," she said. "They'll discover the value of playing an instrument, they'll gain an appreciation for others who play, and they'll enjoy the socialization."

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Senior citizen band; page three

WHO: Aspiring musicians, ages 55 and older, who have never played an instrument or who have not played for many years

WHAT: The University of Dayton New Horizons Band

WHERE: Reichard Hall, UD's band building

WHEN: An informational meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 12. Weekly lessons will be given Tuesday mornings; full band rehearsals will be Thursday mornings.

HOW: To register, call UD's Institute for Learning in Retirement at (937) 229-3247.

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For media interviews, contact **Linda Hartley** at (937) 229-3232 and **Robert Keil** at (937) 229-2822.